

**Ep #4: How to Make Your Day-To-Day Easier  
With a Young Child**

**PARENTHOOD  
PREP**

with

*Devon Clement*



**Full Episode Transcript**

With Your Host

**Devon Clement**

## Ep #4: How to Make Your Day-To-Day Easier With a Young Child

Today on the podcast I'm going to be talking about how to make your time with your baby or child, particularly with your toddler, a lot more enjoyable and eliminate a lot of the fussing, whining, tantrums, things like that, before they even start. Stay tuned.

Welcome to *Parenthood Prep*, the only show that helps sleep-deprived parents and overwhelmed parents-to-be to successfully navigate those all-important early years with their baby, toddler, and child. If you are ready to provide the best care for your newborn, manage those toddler tantrums, and grow with your child, you're in the right place. Now here's your host, and baby and parenting expert, Devon Clement.

Hello, and welcome to *Parenthood Prep*. I'm feeling particularly well equipped to talk about caring for newborns today, because I just got my first batch of bottle baby kittens for kitten season. I do fostering, so I have been waking up every few hours around the clock to feed these little guys and take care of them. It really reminds you of what it's like to be taking care of a little baby human; although they do eat a lot faster and you can leave them home alone, so that's a pretty strong benefit.

Today, we're going to be talking about one of my favorite topics, which is how to make your overall day and life and experience smoother and happier when you're dealing with a baby, a child, a toddler, or preschooler. Honestly, this even works on adults. What I like to call this is, "treat your kid like a video game character."

So, you know how in a basic video game you have a character, and they have "health"? You want them to have full health, but as different things happen their health sort of ticks down, and you typically need to do whatever you need to do to replenish that health. A game that I love, and my family loves, is *The Legend of Zelda*. In that you have these hearts, and you have to replenish those hearts by finding them, collecting them, and taking potions in the latest versions; it's making food and eating the food, but you want to replenish the hearts.

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And if you have full hearts, you're not going to be walking around looking for food, looking for potions, taking those things to replenish your hearts because they're all there. You're going to be doing other stuff. So, what does that have to do with taking care of your baby or your child?

Well, I'll tell you. Imagine that they have a bar on top of their head that shows their happiness, just like a "health" bar in a video game. And this health bar has three different colors. When it's full, it's green. It's in the green zone for a while, and then it drops down. When it's in the middle, it's yellow. And when it drops all the way down, it's red. And that's when you know, red means trouble.

As you're going through your day with your toddler, your baby, or your kid or whatever, imagine this bar over the top of their head, and then say, "Is the thing that we're currently doing, or the thing that I'm offering them, appropriate for where they are right now in their health bar?"

I'll start with an example. I was at lunch at a restaurant with a friend of mine and her toddler. He was about a year, we had just ordered our food, and she was holding him on her lap. We had the highchair there, but he was sitting on her lap. He was playing with the silverware, the napkins, touching stuff on the table. Just having a great time. Happy to be on mom's lap. Happy to be messing around with stuff, the whole thing.

Then the waiter brings over some bread, really great bread. She starts feeding her son bread. He hadn't asked for it. It was just like, "Oh, here's some bread. Let me give some of this to him." I said, "Stop." And she was like, "What? Why? He loves bread."

I'm like, "I know he loves bread. In about 10 minutes our meals are going to arrive, and you're going to have to put him in the highchair. He's going to be pretty pissed about that, because he's having a lot of fun right now sitting on your lap and playing with the silverware and things. If you feed him all the bread now, not only are we going to have less bread and he's going to be more full, there is nothing that you're going to be able to give him to make the highchair a more positive experience. There's nothing you're going to be able to do to make

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that something that he wants to do. But if you save the bread, and you give it to him when it's time to move into the highchair, he's going to be so happy to be chomping on bread while he's sitting in the highchair, even though he's not in your lap anymore.”

She was like, “Oh my God, yes. You're so right.” I said, “Of course, I am. I've been doing this for my entire life, practically.” But anyway, in that moment when he was sitting on her lap playing with the silverware, whatever, the bar over his head was green. It was green. There was no need to add things that were going to make him even happier. We want to save those things for when we need to utilize them.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you make your entire relationship with your toddler transactional, but when you know that something is coming, that you're going to need to create a positive association for that kiddo, you want to conserve those things and give them to him when he's in the yellow zone or the red zone, like when he has to sit in the highchair.

Of course, the food came, and she put him in the highchair. He started to fuss, she started giving him the bread, and he was thrilled. She and I got to eat our meals. We got to talk. He got to pick at his bread, shove it in his mouth, make a mess, all the things he wanted to do. And it was perfect.

So, the same thing applies, for instance, if your child is getting tired. Like, “Okay, we're out and about. I know that when he starts to get cranky and ready for a nap, I'm going to have to hold him and carry him and all that. That's going to make me tired, and that's going to wear me down because he's heavy. I know that that's part of what I need to do.

When he's not that tired, and he's got some energy, he's in the green zone, he wants to be picked up and carried, I'm going to say, “No, you know what? Why don't you walk on your own now, so that later when you start to get tired, and I pick you up and carry you, that's going to be a more positive and pleasant experience for me. Plus, you'll be able to get some energy out, walk around, all that kind of stuff.”

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Kids, a lot of time, are at their best in the morning. They're in a good mood, especially if they've had a great night's sleep. You can usually get a lot out of your baby in the morning. For instance, tummy time. A lot of babies really don't like doing tummy time. It's not fun for them. It's not enjoyable, and then it makes it not enjoyable for the parents.

If you're doing tummy time when your baby is in the yellow zone or the redzone, because they're tired or they're hungry, or they're cranky or it's just the end of the day, you're not going to have a very successful tummy time. They're going to be crying. They're going to be fussy. Everybody's going to be in a bad mood.

So, you do that sort of stuff first thing in the morning when you know that they have more green for you to work with; more happiness, more health, more energy for you to work with. Think about those zones. When you have preschoolers or older kids, they're great in the morning. They can entertain themselves. They can take care of themselves. They're a lot more independent than later in the afternoon as the day starts to wear on and everybody's cranky.

First thing in the morning when you get up, you're not necessarily going to want to pull out the special toys, the playdough, the water table, the videos. Maybe they don't wake up in the morning and go straight to the TV first thing. Maybe you save TV and videos for later in the day when they're in the yellow, when they're in the red.

This way it's like, "Ooh, this is a special treat. This is not something that I have been doing all day, including when I was green, so I'm not considering this a special treat anymore."

Another thing to think about is if you ever have to confine them in some way. I worked for a family in Australia a bunch of years ago who had toddler twin boys. Sometimes with toddlers, especially with twins, you need to confine them a little bit. Like, when you need to go to the bathroom.

Or if you need to change one's diaper. You don't want the other one getting into trouble or breaking things or digging in the dirty diaper pail or whatever while

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you have one on the changing table, because you can't rush and grab him the way you'd be able to if the other one was in a safe situation.

What this mom did, it was so brilliant. She had the playpen area for the boys, and in it she put all of the super annoying light-up electronic, musical, bleepy-bloopy electronic annoying toys that went into the pen. They didn't have any of those toys outside of the pen. So, when they were outside of the pen, they were happy because they were free. They could roam around and do whatever and climb up her leg and yadda yadda.

But then, when one of them or both of them had to go into the pen, which they did not want to do, that bar dropped from green right down to yellow. It could have gone all the way to red, but as soon as she put them in the pen they saw all their electronic, annoying bleepy-bloopy light-up music toys, and they were like, "Oh, hey, this is great. I love this."

So, you have to think about if you're going to give your kid an experience that's going to make them drop into that yellow zone or that red zone, or they are just naturally, over the course of the day, dropping into that yellow zone or that red zone, what can you do to improve that situation? You'll have a lot more tools at your disposal if you're not using them all up when they're green.

For instance, if all of those electronically bleepy-bloopy toys had been available to them when they were free roaming in the living room, it would have been meaningless for them to have them in the pen. And the pen would have been a negative experience. But now, it's like, "Okay, you have to do this thing that I know you're not going to like. I'm going to make it better for you. I'm going to make it more interesting for you."

Isn't that what we all want in life? How many times do you have to do a chore that you don't want to do? Or go to an appointment you don't want to go to? And then you give yourself a little treat after because it just makes the whole experience better. You want to do that for your kids as well.

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Just have that in the back of your mind. What is their bar? What color is it right now? Is the thing that I'm offering them going to make it better? Going to make it worse? Or am I just wasting my resources on a kid who does not need a happiness replenishment right now.

Eventually, thinking like this will become second nature, you won't even realize you're doing it. But you will realize how much smoother and happier you and your child are at times of the day that used to really, really suck.

If you enjoyed today's show, and don't want to worry about missing an episode, you can follow the show wherever you listen to your podcasts. If you haven't already, I would really appreciate if you could share the podcast with others who you think would benefit, and leave a rating and review to let me know what you think.

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Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Parenthood Prep*. If you want to learn more about the services Devon offers, as well as access her free monthly newborn care webinars, head on over to [www.happyfamilyafter.com](http://www.happyfamilyafter.com).